

CHITTA DHAR 'Hridaya' S

# Nepalese Music

नेपाल संगीत

Translated by  
Thakurlal Manandhar

Chittadhar Hridaya's

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{Address delivered at the prize-giving ceremony inside the Hanu-  
man Dhoka (Layekuli) under the auspicious of the Santi-Raksa--  
Swayam-Sevaka-Sangha Centre}

Translated by - Thakur Lal Manandhar

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*We feel it a great pleasure and privilege to be able now to bring out this .English version of Sri Chitta Dhar Hridaya's esteemed and valuable address on Nepalese Music. We had also had the privilege of publishing the same as an article in ' Nepal ' 1st year No. 4 in N.E 1073 on page 40. We believe that this will prove to be of some help at least to students of our music and that in thus doing our efforts are amply rewarded.*

## NEPALESE MUSIC

Due to want of encouragement for centuries, Nepalese music along with Nepal Bhasa and Nepalese art has now been reduced as it were, to a dead state. Its importance is not properly understood now nor is it easy to explain its tradition. Even then the religious-mindedness of the Nepalese has done a good service in keeping alive the remnants of our music under such circumstances. This is a special feature of our Nepalese culture as well as an indication of the far-sightedness of the Nepalese people that we give a religious colouring to our national or tribal cultures. Yes, it is not so easy to fix a time when our music originated but we can guess that it might have originated as early as the creation of huma-

nity itself or—according to the evolutionary theory—when mankind evolved into human form and learnt to cry for food and weep at any physical pain. At that time this music in the form of smiling in pleasure and happiness and singing for joy must have come into being, even the art of dancing.

Now, before we deal with Nepalese music, let us ask what Nepalese culture is. It seems very necessary to know on which religious faith as a support this culture is remaining till now. Most of the historians generally begin Nepalese history with the help of the Swayambhu Purana alone. That makes it clear that Nepal first was a Buddhist country and then Hindu ( Shaiva, Sakta & Vaisnava ). So the ancient culture of Nepal was Buddhistic in origin and afterwards came the influence of Hindu culture upon it. However that may be, we have now, with the two cultures going hand in hand, been producing works of literature in conformity with the same culture and also our music in accordance with it. Therefore, when speaking of music it will not be out of place here to write a few lines

on Mahadev, who is the unification of both the cultures.

Experts in music have it that altogether six ragas came into being, five from the five mouths of Mahadev and one from the mouth of Parvati while grammarians say that " pratyahara " like ai, ung, ri, rik, and so on, came into being from Mahadev's damaru. Let that be as it may, both the schools have Mahadev as their basis. In either of the two it is Mahadev who is to be invoked. Therefore, let us first deal with ' pratyahara.'

One day Mahadev fell into a happy mood and he danced beating his damaru. From the damaru series of pratyahars were being produced which had as their components " sthana " ( like Kantha, Talu, etc. ) " nada " ( like udat-ta, anudatta ) and " tala " ( like matra etc. ) and laya. This very dance with nada and tala is the a. b. c. of music. We can guess that afterwards Mahadev and Parvati together created the six ragas by producing svara and dhvani and by combining nada or sruti. Through the centuries we ( the Nepalese ) have been calling this very Mahadev by the name of Nasa:deo, dancing

the tandav nrtya, the creator of Jatiya music and raga. Now it may be understood that our music is as old as our country.

As Jati music originated after the production of dvani and svara by the combination of different nadas and srutis springing from pratyahara, so too Veda or 'sruti' had its origin in the samyoga of words made of vowels and consonants springing from the same pratyahar. In the vedas too they might have sought help from this musical principle to sing the samans which were given so much importance by Sri Krishna when he said, "Among the Vedas I am the Samaveda".

Afterwards came the different Acharyas like Tumburu, Narada, Bharata, Hanuman, Krishna, and so on. And through Narada the six ragas each with six raginis were propagated and by their connection many different issues came into being. But within the domain of raga the question as to the source and originator of the Dhrupad style remains still a controversial point. After Dhrupad style came the Dhamar style which is easier and more attractive. Likewise Khyal, Tappa, Thumari and so on

followed which have each their own speciality. Dhrupad and Dhamar have special features like " dugun, caugun, astagun, adi, kumari, etc. " As we cannot make use of tan in it, raga is fully expressed by " boltan ". Solemnity is its chief characteristic. In khyal ' svar ' functions more ( like gamak, mir, kheech, etc ). In Tappa we can execute various tans. There is tan all through from sthayi to antara. Likewise in thumari laya, svara and tan can be applied but in it we cannot have purity of rag. It has delicate sentiments and is easy to sing for women and that is why this style is popular with many. Afterwards came gazal or modern light music with western garb. It is not necessary to speak much about it.

Now let us look towards Nepalese music. From times immemorial we have been lovers of music, from before the days when Mahayana Buddhism took the form of Tantrism.

When this Tantrayana was introduced into Nepal we made it our own by adding the sixteen deities called the sodasa-lasya. Of them there are such ones who dance and sing with different instruments of music like

vina, vansi, mrdanga and ta: etc. together with puja offerings like flowers, vermillion, lamps, incense and food offerings etc. These puja offerings we call panchopachar. Not only are these deities given reverential position during worship but also our forefathers who were lovers of music, have exhibited them in temples and on supporting beams. It can be guessed that this music originated before Jati-gayan took the form of rag.

At the time when the worship of many Bodhisattvas and deities was introduced into Buddhism, Indian music took the form of Rag and in Rag too came the Dhrupad style. How could our forefathers remain inactive under such circumstances. In no time they gave place to it in Nepalese music with our own stamp and colour, though the names of ragas and raginis remained the same. This is a peculiarity with us. For instance the Carca ( Carya ) songs in which there is the singing of alap which we call " Raga-kaegu " before and after singing. Also there is dhrupad or sthayi which we call " Dhuwa-kaegu ", and antara, abhog and sancari etc , which we call Caran.



Because this ' caca ' is sung in different rags and raginis and in different tals, and also because of its being sung in groups, it is not easy to execute dvinguna, chauguna, boltan etc. The alap only offers scope for technical skill and the "ta:" is its instrument for tal.

The acharyas called this "caca geet". Karnapada, Jalandhara, Dharma Deva, Bodhacarya, Bakabajra, Amogha Vajra, Siddhi Vajra, Sveta Vajra. Sasvata Vajra, Ratna Vajra, Lila Vajra, Hasa Vajra, Paramadi Vajra, Surata Vajra and Jamana:gubhaju etc. used to compose the caca songs themselves, and used to sing them by creating their own tala and sur. And some of these cacas are written in Nepal-Bhasa (Newari), which is a blessing for our literature. They have worked miracles by means of these cacas. It is not long ago that Surata Vajra while singing a caca spread his chadar over the Brahmaputra and walked across the river. And Jamana: gubhaju fed his goats with the leaves of the main branch of a tree by pulling the branch with his toes. Their descendants still are experts in this art. Three of these cacas have been published in Rahul Sankritayan's

book "Puratattwa-nibandhavali" viz. "Akhaya niranjan", Trihanda ( ti-adda ) and Kolai. Another manuscript, Dwahakosa contains many of these cacas.

In combination with these we find Bhavanrtya and the bhavas are expressed by means of mudras and "Than" (postures). Furthermore, to illustrate these bhavas they invented the "Paenta:" ( straight trumpets ) by means of which the dance was inspired with life. Though there is no special technical skill as regards "Sur" in it there is enough "camatkar" ( technical brilliance ) in tal. This we can see even now in "Kumha:pyakhan" ( a dance in Taleju ). Even before Taleju Bhavani was brought to Nepal our ancestors knew how to dance with "paenta" and "kwota" ( a kind of triple drum ). Afterwards other dances, variations of the same dance, like "deo-pyakhan", "neta-madu-pyakhan", "Debi-pyakhan", "Sikhali-pyakhan", "Jala-pyakhan", "pachali-pyakhan", "thetso-pyakhan", "Nava-durga-pyakhan" etc, are accompanied by ponga and other kinds of khin. These two are very suitable to Bhavanrtya. It may be after that that the dhamar style

came into being in raga in India and became the fashion in our country too. This style is still practised now during the worship of Saraswati in the month of Phalgun. At about the same time there came into being "Mahakali-pyakhan" to the accompaniment of "rasana", "gujerati" etc. (wind-instruments) and drums like pascima, dholak, nagara etc. When Gayasuddin ( Tughlak ) invaded Mithila, King Hari Simha dev came to Nepal in about 1381 V.E. ( 1324 A.D. ) and with him came many scholars. These scholars produced dramas in a language of mixed Sanskrit and Maithili, and they were performed. Afterwards also such dramas in Sanskrit and Maithili mixture were composed up to the days of Ranajit Malla ( 1775 V.E. 1718 A.D. ). In other dramas like Hanuman natak and Kati-pyakhan ( which were written during king Siddhi Narsingh's time ( beginning of the 18th. Century ) etc. we find the Bhasa lhaegu ( prose ) in Newari. This kind of drama we still find during "gumpuni" ( month preceding Indrayatra ) and Indrayatra. Now this kind of dances has to be adapted to modern times by specialists.

As I have said before, by the time when music took the form of ragas and raginis, Nepalese music too introduced them. It goes without saying that caca is included, because we find hundreds of ragas in it like Nata, Hindol, Bhairav, Vasanta, Pancam, Dhanasri, Karnadi, Bhairavi, Todi, etc. In other kinds of music also there are ragas and raginis of all the ten Thats like Bilaval, Iman, Svarath, Ramkali, Sri, Marva, Kafi, Asavari, Bhairavi and Multani etc. Most of these fall into Dhrupad style while the Phagu Dhamar is in Dhamar style. Among these Ragas and Raginis, though the names of ragas are the same they have music with different Thats. First of all let us take Malasri. In the Sastric Malasri it is in Kalyan That pentatonic with omission of Rishabh and Dhaivat. Pancam is Vadi and Samvadi is sadja without Komal and this rag is sung at any time after the third prahar. But our Malasri is in the Kafi That and heptatonic Vadi Pancam, Samvadi Sadju. It stresses both Gandhara and Nishad. This raga is sung from the Kayastami day to Katimpuni ( Sept. -Oct. ) Similarly let us take Vasanta.

The Sastric one is in Purvi That ( there are five kinds sa sam, sa sam, sam sam, sa sa, sa sam). In all of these we find tivra Madhyam. In some of them ri and dha and ga are Komal. In all of the Sadja is Vadi and Sam Vadi is Pancam and in those without Pancam Madhyam is Sam Vadi. This raga is sung after the third prahar at night. Our Vasanta, however, is of Bhairavi That and Audava-sampurna. Vadi Dhaivat and Sam Vadi ga. All Komal. This raga is sung from the Sripancami day to Holi puni ( Feb.—March ). In the same way, though differing much from the Sastric raga, when we hear Malasri we feel as if Monhi ( Vijaya Dasami ) has come. And when we hear Vasanta, our minds leap up. This is a speciality we have in these two ragas. There are, however, many songs which fall within the “ Sur ” of Sastric ragas, especially in gwara or prabandha sangit. Because, when we are taught this gwara not only the melody is taught in accordance with the ( sastric ) Sur, but also Tal ( on the instruments ). Therefore, even without the help of instruments this kind of music coincides with Sur. For instance,

we have Bhagavan gwara or Sri Krishna gwara. The rag in them is Brindavani sarang but we call it only Sarang. Perhaps it is so because both fall into Kafi That. In this there are five Tals viz. Cho, Palema, Astara, Jati and Pratal in various sequence. It is customary to have an Alap. We also take some songs from books like Sursagar etc. dealing with the life of Sri Krishna and also compose songs in our own language and call them by the name of Ras. We sing them in various ways with various Sastric surs. Up to the present day these songs have lost nothing of their appeal and some of them are not excelled by modern music.

Though we do not use Svara vadyas when we sing, we have wind-instruments like Muhali Gujerati, Bae, Bansuri, etc. to the accompaniment of Tala vadyas. Stringed instruments we do not use much except the Piwanca (kind of Ektar) and Sarangi.

But we have this peculiarity as regards svara or raga-ragini that we have our own rag viz. Byancali, which is to be sung early in the morning and Vasanta, Ghatu, Puvajya, Sihnajya,

Silu, Malasri, etc, seasonally, and wedding songs to be sung all through the night of the wedding.

In this same way we have different kinds of bayan ( tala-vadyas ) and also different Tals. Our speciality lies in these things. As said before Paynta:, Kota:, Ponga, and Deokhin are of course our old instruments, and along with them we find dab dab (damaru). Furthermore, in imitation of the mrdanga, which is so highly spoken of by Kalidas we have the danga:, by eliminating the syllable mri, and by replacing the khau ( iron-filing dab ) by dough on both sides. As in the Moghul period they cut in two the mrdanga and introduced the tabla, we too made the Koncakhin with parchment only on one side, and without the need of bama we produce both bols with one single hand. Further we have martial music which increases our marching speed on the Dhimay for going on a long journey and which is ornamented with a bamboo pole and flags, like national flags. In the same manner we have the blowing of Kaha for funeral processions and Dha:, Nayekhin etc. with the blowing of horns during the month of Gunla. Later

on, the Desikhin came from Bengal, but with that too we did mix our own style, not only in bol and tal, but we changed the shape itself. The Bengali khin has one such a narrow end that it is difficult to use the full hand, and therefore we widened it. At a later date perhaps the Maga khin ( madal ), Akas bajan ( kind of tamburin ) or Damphu have been introduced. All these instruments are collectively termed as Nava-bajan.

Of these instruments specially those with Khau ( iron-filing compound ) are prohibited from Sitinakha to Gathanmuga chahre ( a day in Baisakh till a day in Asarh ), as are Deokhin, Dhimay etc. This is the farsightedness of our forefathers because from Sitinakha we have to work in the fields and we are very much inclined to music and if we pursue that inclination, this work will suffer, and thus every possibility of food shortage will be there. That is why abandoning art they give more importance to national life from Sitinakha to the Caturdasi of Gathanmuga, and are prevented from making music. As a result, during those months, we sing songs



without instruments and so have forgotten what "tal" is. Even among the instruments with Khau, only dyokhin, koncakhin, desikhin etc. are forbidden, but pascima, tabla etc. which came later ( from outside ) are allowed.

Now let us give our attention to tal. There are different kinds of tal and different matras. In Paenta and Caca there are math, sunyamath pyangamath, bhavamath, trihura, ektal, sani, khadvanga, durjamam, jhapa, jhaka, batika, casyati, jati, khadanjati, dhingajati, dhalanjati, etc. In other kinds of songs, dapa and pascima bhajan there are cho, prata:, jati, lanta:, palima, astara, graha, doman, cauman, pancaman, navaman etc. In all these tals we have matras like the sastric tals, but we do not count the matras while teaching the instruments. If we count them, they will be as follows, cho has four matras, prata: and jati have seven matras, lanta: eight, palima six, astara ten and graha fourteen. These are the matras in our seven calis. In the same way in "gwara" we mix the seven talas and call them doma, cauma, pancama, navama etc. There will be matras in other difficult tals as well but because

they are of “ dhima laya ” counting is not so easy. A few can be given. Trihura has eight matras, khadvanga has ten, jhapa ten and matha has fourteen. Our Sinhajya songs have matras too and can be sung with drums. We have forgotten its original tal as I have said already on account of its having fallen into disuse But that tal had sixteen matras “ tin tin chu, tin chu, tin tin chu ”, in other words a combination of palima and cho would be the Sinhajya tal.

To accentuate the beats (to give tal) of these matras we have metronome-like instruments as for instance the ta:, with the Painta: ( kind of ponga ) the ta: only, with “ Dhimay ” tainain and bhusya:, with Khin and Koncakhin ta: and babhu, with Dholak and Nayakhin ta: and chusya:, with Danga and Dha: ta: bhusya: and so on.

In olden days our Nepal music was complete in all respects, comprising songs, instruments, dance etc. receiving patronage of kings and cultured people of high lineage. Thanks to the farsightedness of our forefathers ! our music is still alive even in an age of downward trend. Thanks to the platforms built by them for the use of Bhajan Guthi ( as far instance pascima-

bhajan ), Dapakhala:, Dhimay khalā: and Gunla bajankhala: (processional music), madha madha, and kha: pyakhan, Gan pyakhan, and so on. For lack of interest especially among the higher classes, the artistic faculty requiring imagination to develop nada and svara is now absent, but the sastric system of tal remains even to this day.

On account of political suppression for centuries, and economic poverty it has not been able to maintain itself, its propagation has decreased gradually. Foreign scholars too have not given so much honour and esteem to it as they have done to our art and literature. Though a few of them have taken interest, it is still inadequate. One lover of music, Surendra Mohan Thakur has mentioned Narasinga and Ponga (phunga as he calls it) in his book called "Nepalese Horn". The reason may be, that when he and his party were in Nepal, they did not have the chance to witness dances, bhajan, dapa etc.

It is a matter of regret that even after the introduction of democracy by our patriotic King, it has not been given its place by "Nepal Radio", nor by any other cultural institution.

This year Santi-Raksha-Swayam-Sevak-Sangh (centre) gave at least some encouragement though only to the music of Kathmandu district and not of Nepal as a whole. But this is like pouring water on sand. What is there to gain by this conference,—it is only once—without having received encouragement for centuries ? But though a grain of seed is very small it may in the long run grow into a big tree. Because of this conference we, lovers of music and brother's Nepalese have had the occasion to meet and to contribute our mite towards the development of this art. This too is a great thing for us. Now it is the time for us not to seek help from outside only but to develop our music by ourselves in our own way along with the development of Nepalese art and literature. So let us adorn our Mother Nepal though we are poor. Who else will do this kind of service to the mother country if we keep quiet ? Who will uphold the dying honour of our country ? Should it not be by means of musicians, craftsmen and men of literature ? Let us say with one voice, " Victory to the music of Nepal. "



## Our Publications:—

- ( 1 ) Yogasudha
- ( 2 ) Nepal Bhasha gaychoygu
- ( 3 ) Mastay nhyavosa
- ( 4 ) Nibandha Parichaya
- ( 5 ) Sahityaya Sulchan
- ( 6 ) Pulangu mya
- ( 7 ) Gadya pucha:
- ( 8 ) Viswantarya machat dan
- ( 9 ) Chhwasa
- (10) Arhat nanda
- (11) Yaka:miya cha
- (12) Thulincha
- (13) Jheegu sahitya
- (14) Anka ganit
- (15) Padya pucha:
- (16) Gadya pucha: ( 2 )
- (17) Chin lumana
- (18) Muna swan
- (19) Khaiyamy ruvai
- (20) Nepal sangeet

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